

Granite statue stands tall like the heroes it honors

- The Mormon Battalion granite monument is 29 feet high and located on the extreme southeast corner of the State Capitol grounds.
- The battalion's march was the world's longest-ever infantry march — on foot — 2,000 miles.
- The battalion not only included some 500 men but also 29 women who washed clothes, cooked and attended to ill men.
- The official U.S. Army name for the battalion was "The Iowa Volunteers." (The battalion was recruited and left from that state.)
- Salaries paid to battalion members helped the pioneers reach and settle Utah territory. It also meant the pioneers were able to pay frontiersman Miles Goodyear cash for the land now known as Ogden.
- The mother of the first white baby ever born in Colorado was a member of the Mormon Battalion.
- The battalion helped initiate development of the state of California, since their trek ended in San Diego.



People view the Mormon Battalion Monument after the rededication ceremony on Capitol's grounds.

Mormon Battalion Monument rededicated

Pres. Hinckley offers prayer for refurbished statue at the Capitol.

By Lynn Arave
Deseret News staff writer

The Mormon Battalion suffered more hardship than any group in LDS Church history — with the exception of the 1856 handcart company.

President Gordon B. Hinckley of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints recalled the battalion's heroism against great odds during the rededication of the Mormon Battalion Monument Saturday morning on the Utah State Capitol grounds.

"They suffered unspeakable difficulties," President Hinckley told an audience of about 400. "I think we can never really appreciate what they went through."

He said the loyalty of the battalion can never be questioned and spoke of the group's tremendous contribution to both the church and the future state of Utah.

President Hinckley also offered the dedicatory prayer for the refurbished 70-year-old statue and said exactly 151 years ago, the battalion members were marching along the Rio Grande River.

Although the battalion marched its way into history more than a century and a half ago, most people likely don't know where the battalion's Salt Lake monument is. In fact, Gov. Mike Leavitt wasn't even sure himself — until he was asked to speed up the schedule for the monument's improvements.

The monument is located on

the southeast corner of the Capitol grounds, partially surrounded by a hedge and pine trees.

Leavitt also spoke during the 80-minute program and focused on two words, rededication and remembrance.

"He said we don't really rededicate monuments, but rather we rededicate ourselves in this process.

"It's a part of the history of all of us and the virtue we enjoy," he said of the battalion's record-long march.

D. Clayton Fairbourn, commander of the modern Mormon Battalion, said the march was a classic test of loyalty for the LDS people.

"This was a heroic sacrifice," he said. "Some gave their lives."

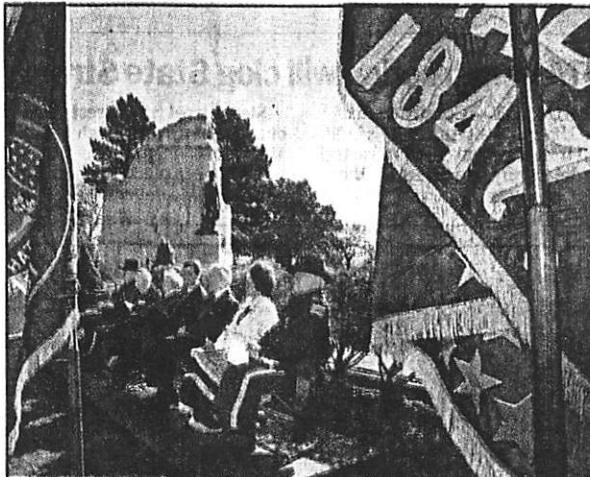
He said the pay given by the U.S. government to battalion members not only returned to the pioneers to help them in their trek to Utah, but also helped purchase the ground for the city of Ogden from frontier settler Miles Goodyear.

"We own that city," Fairbourn said. "We bought it for the state of Utah."

Paul Madsen, a colonel in the battalion, recounted the group's history and said the monument's refurbishing represented a decade of work.

The monument was originally dedicated on May 30, 1927, by President Charles W. Nibley of the LDS Church's First Presidency. The cost of the monument, which took 22 years to construct, was \$200,000.

Shirley Maynes, president of the U.S. Mormon Battalion Ladies Auxiliary, said the rededication truly fits the 1997 sesquicentennial theme of "Faith in Every Footstep."



Pres. Gordon B. Hinckley, Gov. Mike Leavitt and others attend the rededication of the Mormon Battalion Monument at State Capitol, above. Pres. Hinckley, below, spoke of the battalion's sacrifices.

